



Family Builders of Catawba Valley

507 Boundary Street, Conover, NC 28613

PHONE (828) 465-8901

FAX (828) 466-1058

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Sybil Good (828) 465-8901 or
sgood@catawbacountync.gov

Heart Gallery Exhibit Opening & Gala a Huge Success

The inaugural Heart Gallery of Catawba Valley exhibit opened with a successful Gala and Grand Opening Ceremony on Friday, February 16 at the Newton-Conover Civic and Performance Place. The event that featured live musical performances, guest speakers, and a silent auction drew over 120 attendees.

The Heart Gallery is an innovative gallery-style that gives voice to the children in the Catawba County foster care system currently awaiting adoption. The project is the collaborative effort of Catawba County resident Grace Wepner, Miss Gastonia 2007, Family Builders of Catawba Valley, and the Catawba County Department of Social Services. The Heart Gallery exhibit features portraits of children who are currently awaiting adoption. National Award winning photographer David Crosby of Hickory generously donated his time and talent to capture each child's emotions and personality through his camera. The hope is that each portrait will capture the heart of a caring and loving adult, giving each child a family, a home and a future.

The evening began with musical entertainment by Beaconwood, before Miss Wepner began the evening's festivities as Mistress of Ceremonies and Spokesperson for the Heart Gallery of Catawba Valley. The evening that followed included other musical entertainment, as well as an original poem recital by one of the children featured in the Gallery. The most moving moment of the evening came when adoptive parent-to-be, Clay Parker, and his future adoptive son, Steven shared their story. There were not many dry eyes in the room as young Steven expressed his heartfelt joy and gratitude at having finally found a permanent and loving home.

The silent auction was also a big success, raising funds that will be used to enhance the lives of youth in the Catawba County foster care system. These monies finance those small extras that fall outside of what the government can provide, such as school field trips, class picture, and yearbooks. Donations can

be made to this fund at any time by contacting Family Builders of Catawba Valley at 828-465-8901.

Also, in benefit of this fund, the Heart Gallery will host a luncheon featuring North Carolina native and award winning pianist, John Coffey on March 7th. Tickets are available in advance for \$15 through Family Builders of Catawba Valley at 828-465-8901 or by contacting Anne Wepner at 828-320-5307.

The Heart Gallery photography exhibit will remain at the Newton-Conover Civic and Performance Place through March 7th, before it travels to other area venues, raising awareness of the critical need for more foster and adoptive parents.

For more information, please contact Sybil Good at Family Builders of Catawba Valley at 828-465-8901 or Anne Wepner at 828-320-5307.

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